

# Milwaukee County Mental Health Board

## Governance v. Management

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# Traditional Board Responsibilities

- Governance is the legitimate authority to influence and enact policies and decisions.
- The Board's role is to
  - Set direction
  - Ensure adequate resources
  - Oversee the health of the organization
- Theoretically, Boards govern, staff manage.

# Traditional Board Responsibilities

## Boards

- Set overall strategic objectives and policies
- React to the ways the staff plans to achieve those aims
- Monitor and evaluate the organization progress towards its goals

# Roots

- Separation of powers--Aristotle Politics  
400 AD
- One part of government is given certain powers to limit the powers of other branches.
- Checks and Balances– the ends of government are better achieved if the system of checks and balances is observed.

# The Board/Management Relationship

## Board Roles

- Support the Executive
- Approve high level goals and policies
- Make major decisions
- Oversee management and organizational performance
- Act as external advocates and diplomats

## Management Roles

- Seek the board's counsel
- Recommend goals and policies
- Frame decisions in the context of mission
- Bring timely information and research to the board
- Keep the board informed
- Run the organization

# Reality

- Confusion, tension and differences of opinion
- It's a balancing act
- More easily said than done
- Simpler in theory than in practice
- Not a complete separation
- **It's a challenge for talented, knowledgeable people not to assume they are doing their jobs when they delve into management decisions.**

# Goal: Govern More, Manage Less

- Use a long- range lens.
- Debate and formulate long-term strategic plans.
- Provide appropriate stewardship.
- Avoid micro-management.
- Provide critical capital—
  - Intellect
  - Reputation
  - Resources and
  - Access

# Goal: Govern More, Manage Less

- Avoid the temptation to co-manage or second guess.
- Remember that tinkering in one area affects many others.
- Ask if the organization is acting in the best interest of the public.
- Ask if it is acting in the best interest of the stakeholders who are served by the organization's mission.

# Seven questions

1. Is it big?
2. Is it about the future?
3. Is it core to the mission?
4. Is a high-level policy decisions needed to resolve a situation?
5. Is a red flag flying?
6. Is a watchdog watching?
7. Does the Exec. want and need the board's support?

# Seven Characteristics of An Effective Board

## **AN EFFECTIVE BOARD**

1. Is mission centered
2. Approaches board work professionally
3. Focuses time and attention on strategic issues
4. Views the board composition as strategic
5. Uses evaluation to learn rather than criticize
6. Knows its value to the organization
7. Has a strong relationship with the Exec.

# Govern Well

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